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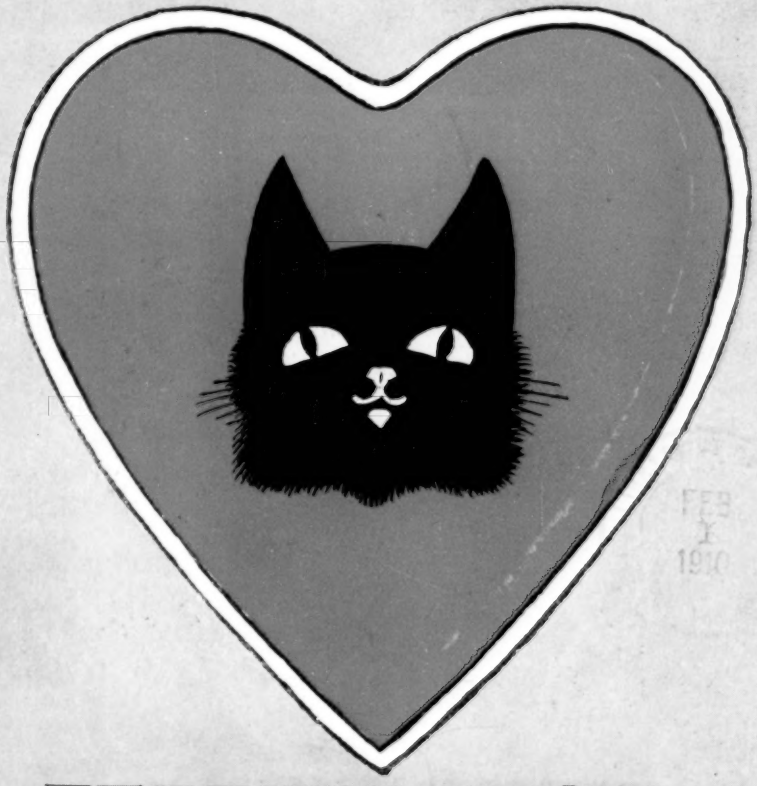
The Black Cat



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The Black Cat

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The Wife.*

BY B. BRACE.

IT was the usual little Western summer resort. Elsewhere throughout the world a summer resort is a place where toilettes and social distinctions are the capitalized part of the dull old story. But in the West the girl who goes limousine riding of mornings in her tailored silks and the girl who rides horseback in bloomers hug each other fearfully beneath the night stars when ghost stories are told around the camp fire. This will show you that the democracy is a thing colossal.

Probably that was one reason why Edwina Goodwin was not afraid to strike up acquaintance this July afternoon with an inordinately plain, sturdy, middle-aged piece of femality — one can hardly say of feminity — whom she found sitting on a log that the Sound had tossed up months before and had never come back after.

But it was only one reason. Edwina would have struck up acquaintance with an Igorrote head hunter or a King of England had the mood seized her. And this afternoon she was seeking relief from the crying babies and lovesick couples and quarreling spouses that littered the otherwise beautiful beach.

She was seeking momentary escape, too, from something else.

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Edwina Goodwin did not know whether she was in love or not. That is, she was sure she was in love for the time, but being of an essentially analytical nature, she hesitated. Was love elastic enough to stretch out over the drab and gray, the thin-chested, the wrinkledly years? She had known apparently promising cases where the material on hand had not proved enough to make up a decent-sized honeymoon.

Therefore, Edwina — to change the figure — kept her man dangling over a slow fire without being sure that she would ever really have an appetite for him. Meanwhile she made beach acquaintances.

She drew near the long-lined, gingham-clad figure.

"Good afternoon," she said in her friendly, vitally interested tone.

The woman did not start, or look in the least surprised. It was almost as if she had been waiting there for Edwina. She slid over on her log to give the girl room, at the same time turning towards her a large-featured, strong-looking face.

"How d'ye do?" she said, and smiled.

Edwina sat down with a distinct sense of adventure. Here was an opportunity for her to rub shoulders with a woman of almost another world than her own very modern, very fashionable sphere.

"Isn't it lovely, all this?" she asked, waving her little tanned hand at the foamy tide coming in, at the blue mountain ridge beyond, at the whole big, free-breathing Western panorama. Edwina sincerely thought that it was lovely, but chiefly she wanted to see how a woman of this type would appreciate nature.

She turned and looked at the girl with a hint of good-natured irony in her frank gray eyes.

"It is good of you to like it," she said. "Now me, I'm not used to anything else. It's been my home for years."

"You live here?" murmured Edwina, somehow abashed.

"I work near here. This is just our vacation. We work at the Insane Asylum yonder," with a nod of her head.

The big building stood some distance back on the elevation opposite them. In the early days of the state it had been the barracks headquarters, and it was built in a style of some dignity.

An avenue of very old elms led up to its gates. It overlooked the shining bay and the wooded hills.

To the girl its beauty of position seemed a mockery. She was of those who have that fear of diseased minds that some reserve for dead bodies.

"You work at an Insane Asylum!" she exclaimed. "How interesting! But how awful! Have you been there long?"

"More than ten years, Miss," answered the woman, quietly. "Yes, it seemed awful enough at first. Do you know what got on my nerves worst? It wasn't the violent patients, nor the troublesome, it was the idiotic ones. Their eyes, Miss! Have you ever happened to notice the eyes in an Insane Asylum?"

The girl shook her head.

"When I first went in I thought that the crazies were untidily dressed, that their hair was mussy. But when I looked at them again I saw that that wasn't true at all. It was their eyes that made them look like that. O, their eyes are so blank, so empty — just full of emptiness." She smiled a little at the well frayed joke.

The girl beside her did not smile.

"O!" she said softly, and then more vehemently, "How can you stand it?"

"One stands things," remarked the woman stolidly. "The life is maybe no worse than most. But it just fell out that the dreadfullest things happened when I first went in before I was hardened to the work.

"There was one pretty little girl-thing in my ward whose husband had deserted her before they had been married six months. Most of the time she'd just stand there looking out with her big, sad eyes, as if she was waiting for him to come back. It'd make you cry to look at her.

"By and by her baby was born. My, it gave me the shivers, Miss, to hear a baby cry in that place! Then its mother got wild suddenly, and seemed to hate the child. We watched it as well as we could when it was with her, but one day in a whole room full of patients, she strangled it right before my eyes — that quick!"

Edwina Goodwin shuddered. Up the beach some children were clamoring to be allowed to stay in the water just a little, lit-

tle longer. Their shrill young voices brought the girl a curiously relieving sense of reality.

"Do you know what I would do with that husband if I had my way?" she said, her girlish face white and stern. "I would shut him up, quite sane, to spend eternity in an insane asylum. Married six months! O, the thing they call love!"

The woman looked back at her with kind, shrewd eyes that understood about the unanswered question. Under her gaze Edwina felt the red run over her tanned cheek.

"That's one case; you mustn't judge by one case," she said, quietly. "Now I could tell you a story that's just as much on the other side."

"Tell me," said the girl, breathlessly. Her voice commanded but her eyes begged.

"I was brought up to be a lady's maid," began the woman. "Maybe you wouldn't think it to look at me now, but this is the regulation dress at the Asylum, and I've gotten over wanting anything else."

"One of the names that I used to hear oftenest then was that of Westhall. The man and his wife were as wealthy and fashionable a couple as ever set foot in our town. He was a banker, and she had a corner on half the society columns Sundays.

"My, but she used to have a good time! Out every day in their carriage or machine, and always with a new admirer. And that many jewels and dresses that there was no believing it.

"My missus was jealous of Mrs. Westhall, and used to say that she'd married him for his money, and was more in love with any one of a dozen men. But I'd seen her myself at our teas and receptions and things, and I used to think that a pretty, frivolous little thing like her couldn't be more in love with one man than with another. Give her a good time and whichever man went with it, I'd say to myself. And she certainly wasn't to be blamed for not devoting herself entirely to a big, moody, scowling thing like Mr. Westhall.

"It wasn't long before we found out what he had to scowl about. All of a sudden his bank went broke! Nothing could have surprised our town more. It wasn't a pleasant surprise, either. Plenty of people had their every cent invested in that

bank. My family lost so much that the missus couldn't afford to keep a maid, and I had to go. I got work in the Asylum; the pay is better.

"I didn't much more than step in ahead of Mr. Westhall. I suppose he'd been worrying for a long time. The loss of his friends and home and position had done the rest. Funny how quick they can go, isn't it?"

The girl nodded, shivering. Ah, friends and home and position, those three things that seem so sure!

"I can't say that I felt very sorry for Mr. Westhall after what he had done. I remember thinking that it would be a good thing for his wife. It would save her from having to apply for a divorce, and with her prettiness she'd get another husband in no time.

But he was a beautiful crazy to take care of — hardly any trouble at all. Most of the time he'd stand around as rigid as a corpse for half a day at a time. Only one or two violent days a month — but those were violent.

"He'd been there three weeks when one day while I was in the office a woman dressed in black and heavily veiled came in.

"'You wish to see some patient?' the Superintendent asked. He's always a very pleasant, polite man.

"'No,' she answered, hesitating. 'I've come to see about getting work.'

"'Work!' exclaimed the Superintendent, surprised, for there was all kinds of style in the way she carried herself. 'What kind of work?'

"'I should like to be a guard or a nurse,' said she, not quite sure of the terms. 'But, perhaps I could cook, or do the laundry or the chamberwork.'

"'We have a man cook,' Mr. Lanning told her. 'The laundry and the chamber work are done by the patients themselves. As for a guard, you're not to be thought of. The thing isn't possible. You aren't strong enough by half.'

"'I'm stronger than I look,' said the woman, putting back her veil. I couldn't believe my eyes. She looked for all the world like Mrs. Westhall. But I knew I was a fool to think she'd gotten so low as to work in an asylum.

"'I'm sorry, but you won't do,' said Mr. Lanning.

"Then a strange thing happened, Miss. The woman threw herself on the floor, clutching at the Superintendent's hand.

"'Let me stay,' she sobbed. 'I don't ask for any pay. I'm willing to work for my board. My God, I must stay!'

"I don't know how Mr. Lanning got rid of her. I left the office, for he don't like his employees to show any feeling, and I was new then. It seemed to me that she must be starving to beg for work like that.

"About a month later, Mr. Lanning came up to my ward, bringing a woman muttering to herself.

"'A new patient for you, Miss Frink,' he told me. 'Be good to her, for she comes from high life. It's Mrs. Westhall, wife of Number 62, who robbed half the town last spring.'

"I was looking straight at Mrs. Westhall when he said that, and I saw the red run over her face. Now, you know, it isn't usual for our patients to blush when they overhear us talking about them. It bothered me. Besides, her eyes didn't have the right look, — or rather, they did.

"While I was thinking this, we passed her husband. He went on without the least sign of recognition, looking at nothing, as usual. But she gave a little cry that made me feel queer. It had heartbreak in it, but it wasn't the Asylum cry."

She stopped a minute. Into the pause came the querulous tones of the husband and the wife who, a little way off, were discussing domestic relations. When she went on her voice was somehow changed, less abrupt, softer, as if it marveled at the thing it told.

"It'll seem silly, maybe, to a young thing like you to say that this pretty, frivolous woman was pretending insanity to be near the man who'd brought her to poverty and disgrace. It does sound foolish. But I grew surer of it as the days went by.

"Maybe you know that all lunatics think that all sane persons are crazy? It wasn't two days before they began to avoid Mrs. Westhall. A little knot of them would get together and point their fingers at her and laugh, — ugh, it made me shiver! Their laugh is like their eyes. She would crouch back against the wall, looking as scared as a little child. When she thought that

I was noticing her, she'd try to act like the others. She'd laugh sometimes for no reason, but it wasn't the crazy laugh.

"Thursday nights we have a dance on the third floor for the patients, — it exercises them better than anything else. They have to dance whether they want to or not. We teach those who don't know how."

Edwina gasped. She felt that she could never waltz again at one of the happy little Thursday night beach dances without picturing to herself that other dance on the hill yonder.

"My God," she said, softly to herself, without knowing that she spoke.

"Mrs. Westhall got out of it the first time by pretending to be sick. But I got her there the next Thursday night, for I wanted to see what would happen. It's rather a gruesome thing, that dance, Miss, any way you look at it. I'd just as soon see a lot of corpses dancing, as a crowd of crazies. When Mrs. Westhall saw them, and especially the man next her, a big, fat, blear-eyed lunatic, she trembled all over.

"'I can't do it!' she cried. 'I can't dance with them! Don't make me!'

"I was sorry for her, but I had to keep up appearances.

"'You see that man there?' I whispered. 'That's the Superintendent. If he sees you're not dancing, he'll find out the reason why. If you're crazy, why can't you dance with crazy people?'

"She went off without a word, but if you could have seen her face, Miss!

"Time went on, one day like another, as they are in an asylum. Mrs. Westhall got thinner and thinner, and you wouldn't believe me how fast her hair turned gray. When she saw that I knew her secret and meant to help her keep it, she stayed with her husband more. He never recognized her. Most of the time he simply paid no attention to her, but on his violent days it was always her he would fly at first.

"It was one of his violent days and he was in a cell on the fourth floor the time the Asylum caught fire. You may have read about it? It started in the kitchen and spread slowly. We got all the patients out but two. If you could have heard

them howling and screeching! I think hell must be like that. Of course, in the confusion, the doors were all unlocked, and the crazies got scattered. We kept finding them in the woods all week.

"The last patients we took out were those on the fourth floor. It looked reasonable that if anybody had to die it ought to be the worst cases. There were only two patients from my ward in the cells then.

"When I went up to them, — I'll never forget that sight, Miss! I wake up nights and see it yet. There stood Mrs. Westhall at her husband's cell, looking like a child in her nightdress, with her hair falling about her. There was no possible way for her to open the door, but she had broken — that frail little thing had actually broken one of the iron bars of the window. Her husband stood inside fighting her back, utterly mad.

"I've told you the story, Miss. The years have gone by, and Mr. Westhall's never recognized her yet. Lately she's changing. Her eyes are getting the real crazy look. There's no sham about it now. I think she's losing her mind. I'm sure I don't wonder. It would have been easier for her to die a dozen deaths than to live the life she's lived there."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the girl. "It is horrible! You have done wrong. You had no right to let her stay!"

"You're young, Miss," said the woman slowly. "She's been happier there than she could have been anywhere else. I think she even looks forward to being crazy in the hope that he will somehow know her then."

Edwina Goodwin looked straight into the woman's eyes for a minute. This was what love could mean, was it? A great wave of shame for her petty doubt of it passed over her. She held out her hand, and the other saw that it trembled a little.

"Thank you," she said, simply. "But I must go now. There is some one that I must find."

A Stern Chase.*

BY TOM MASSON.

"MR. BIRDSEYE, the London gent, is here, sir, to see you, sir."

Calder looked up at his man, standing in the doorway.

"What does he want?" he asked.

"The representative of the London tailor, sir. He said as how you were to see him to-day, sir, for some fittings."

Calder reflected. He had been getting his clothes at Birdseye's for years — their New York man had called on him at regular intervals, the clothes had been made in London, and Calder had paid the duty. Even then the clothes were not much more expensive than those of an American tailor.

On the other hand, Calder was not sure that clothes made by an American tailor were not better. Some of his friends, who patronized American tailors, had excited his envy. An American tailor had received a hint of this, and he had called on Calder to solicit his trade. Birdseye's man, watchful of his own firm's interest, had found this out. Hence he had been more than unusually persistent. He didn't propose to let a good customer slip through his fingers.

"You tell him, Hobbs," said Calder, "to come around to-night at eight and I'll see him sure. I don't feel like it now. What's that, Hobbs, a note for me?"

"Yes, sir," said Hobbs, advancing with the tray. "It just came, sir."

Calder tore open the note. It read as follows:

> "I leave suddenly for London to-morrow. Won't you come and say good bye?
>
> "POLLY."

Calder jumped up hastily. "What does this mean?" he ex-

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claimed excitedly. "Here, Hobbs, get my boots. Telephone for my car. Get out another shirt. Hurry, Hobbs, where are my trousers?"

Calder, from being a moment before the quintessence of indolence, was now a moving mass of nervous energy. And all because of a few pen strokes made by a pretty girl.

Hobbs obeyed orders.

In fifteen minutes Calder was dashing northward, momentarily in danger of arrest for exceeding the speed limit.

He rang the bell of Polly's father's mansion.

He was evidently expected, for he did not have to wait more than fifteen minutes.

"Well, sir," she said, as she swished in. "You are prompt. Thanks for coming."

She held out her hand.

"Good bye," she said. "I'm off."

He didn't let go.

"What is this — a joke?"

"Certainly not. To-morrow at nine. Perhaps you'd like to see the tickets?"

"I'll believe you although I don't understand. Look here, Polly, when do I get my answer?"

"When I get back."

"Tell me now — what it will be — then?"

She looked at him saucily.

"I can't."

"You mean you won't."

He came up and attempted to take her hands.

"Polly," he said, "you're a flirt. What does this latest move mean, anyway? Are you trying to drive me mad?"

"Certainly not."

"What are you going to Europe for now?"

"Well, Papa invited me. He didn't consult your feelings, sir. He doesn't know about you. He just asked me to go, and I accepted."

"Oh, Polly! Why do you put me off like this? Why can't you tell me that you love me a little?"

"I do — a little. Will that do?"

"Of course it won't."

Suddenly Calder started back.

"That fellow Van Antler. — He's going over to-morrow. I heard he was at the club. Does he sail on the same steamer?"

"Yes."

"And so you are going on his account."

"You jump at conclusions."

He folded his arms sternly and gazed at her.

"Look here, Miss Polly Winslow," he said. "It's all very well to play fast and loose with a man for a certain reasonable period, but there's a limit to all things. Now either you *do* love me, or you *don't*. And either you do love Van Antler or you don't. You've got to decide. I can't stand for everything. I want to know the truth. Otherwise — "

"What will you do?"

"If you don't want to tell me, I shall assume that you don't care for me, and that you're just trying to play with me, and I shall go off and do the best I can to forget you as speedily as possible. I'm not the sort to let any girl ruin me."

"What do you wish to know?"

"Whether you love me or not, and whether you will marry me or not. That's plain enough, isn't it?"

She looked at him soberly.

"I'd rather not answer that question now, Jack," she said.

"Why not?"

"Well, I will tell you frankly. I don't really know how I feel. If I should rashly engage myself to you, why my whole European trip would be spoiled. I must go with Papa. It would be selfish of me to spoil his outing."

"Don't you think it a little unreasonable to keep me in suspense?"

"No, not considering — "

"Do you love any one else?"

"I don't know. You have no right to ask so peremptorily."

"Do you love Van Antler?"

"I don't think so."

"When will you know?"

"When I come back."

"And in the meantime, he's going over there with you. — A beautiful chance for me, eh?"

"I can't decide — now."

"Then good-bye," he said, coldly, extending his hand. "I hope you'll have a pleasant trip."

"Good bye. Don't you understand that my father must be considered?"

"Certainly, but so must I. Good bye."

He turned and left the house without a word. She called, but he did not hear her.

Running out to his car he said to the chauffeur:

"Let me run her."

The man started her up. Off they went. Out of the city through the suburbs, on and on they kept up their mad pace. The darkness came on. They stopped to light the lamps; then on again, on and on.

They had in reality been going in a vast circle.

At midnight Calder got possession of himself. He had worked off his feelings.

"Let's stop in at this hotel," he said, "and get a bite."

They entered a road house, inquired the way back, found that it was nearly forty miles, and concluded to stop there all night.

At seven o'clock in the morning Calder awoke, and went down for his breakfast.

"Well, Bert," he said to the chauffeur, "I led you a pace last night. Wasn't feeling well. Guess we'll meander back to town."

At ten thirty they were in front of Calder's apartment. Hobbs, who had been feverishly watching for them at the window, was on the sidewalk almost before Calder could get out of the car.

"Messages for you, sir. Miss Winslow telephoned, sir, yesterday afternoon. I told her you would be here at eight o'clock to keep appointment with Birdseye's man, sir, and she said you were surely to get her note as soon as you came, sir."

Hobbs handed Calder two notes.

Calder tore open hers first — naturally.

It read:

"You had no right to leave me as you did. I love you. Of course I love you. But if I had told you so I would in honor bound have had to tell

Papa. And this I could not do now. And yet I cannot leave you in this state of mind. You have made it very hard. Mr. Van Antler called after you did. I refused him. I told him I loved you, and the reason I could not tell you on Papa's account. He has given up his trip. I suggested that you would take his room on the steamer. You should receive this in time to do this — that is, if you care to.

"POLLY."

The other was from Van Antler, as follows:

"DEAR CALDER:

"All's fair in love and war. Polly Winslow gave me the go by for fair to-day. I thought there was hope between us. I heard she was going across, and engaged a room in the same steamer. To be candid, old man, I tried to steal a march on you. But to-day she turned me down. She told me about you. I think she is a brick to stick by her father. Won't you take my place on the steamer? You deserve it, as you seem to hold the trumps. I enclose the ticket. You can settle with me when you come back.

"V. A."

Calder looked at his watch. It was 10.45. He sprang inside to a telephone booth, and madly got the number of the steamship office. It seemed ages before he got the connection.

"Has the *Lupania* sailed?"

"Yes, sir."

"What time did she leave the wharf?"

"At 9.15."

"Where is she now?"

"How do we know? Probably in the Swash Channel."

Calder sprang out on the sidewalk.

"Hobbs," he cried, "there's not a moment to lose. Don't stop for anything, Hobbs. You can help me. Get right into the car. Run down to pier 18," he cried to the chauffeur. "That's where my motor boat is."

The car started up.

As they vibrated along, Calder made a calculation on the back of Polly's envelope.

The *Lupania* sailed at 9.15. Her speed was twenty-four knots an hour. But she would go slow out of the harbor. It would probably take her two hours to clear Sandy Hook. Then she would go north by east at full speed.

Calder's eight-cylinder motor boat, the *North Star,* would go under pressure nearly thirty-five knots an hour in smooth water. The *Lupania* had about thirty miles the start. Could they catch her? Calder looked anxiously aloft over the heads of the sky scrapers, as they sped along, to ascertain the direction of the wind. It was a bright clear day.

They arrived at the Pier. Calder sprang out. It was but

the work of a moment to note the amount of gasoline in the tank, to transfer what there was in the motor car, which luckily had been filled that morning.

Hobbs had helped on the motor boat before, so he knew just what to do. In eighteen minutes they were off down the harbor.

"Thank God, Hobbs," said Calder, as he ran up the sparker, "there's no speed limit in New York harbor."

The cylinders clinked merrily, the explosions running into each other in a rhythmic volume of sound. The hill of water in their wake rose higher and higher, as the narrow boat, almost as thin as a knife blade, cut through the dark water faster and faster. They were going a terrific pace. Would the engine stand it? Everything shook.

"Hobbs," shouted Calder, "this ought to teach us a lesson."

"Yes, sir," shouted Hobbs as respectfully in reply as he could. "Of what, may I ask, sir?"

"Always to be ready for an emergency. Always have your spark plugs clean. Always have your gasoline tank full, Hobbs. It's the only safe way in these parlous times."

"Right you are, sir," said Hobbs.

Fort Wadsworth loomed magnificently on their right. Coney Island, long and low, spread its fluted horizon on their port quarter. The spray drenched them. Hungry and thirsty, they knew it not. Their eyes were strained ahead.

On they went. The Sandy Hook lightship loomed now on their right, and seemed to pass them like some retreating image. They shot by pilot boats and little tugs tooted at them noisily.

On they went, until they began to feel the real heavy swells of the broad Atlantic. Then Hobbs, standing in the bow, his hands on his eyebrows, suddenly shouted:

"There she is, sir. Dead ahead."

"I see her," said Calder. A thin line of smoke, a black column in the distance, betokened the *Lupania*. A stern chase is a long chase. Little by little, however, they crept up. It was wonderful to watch the methodical engine, singing away, singing away.

Would the gasoline hold out? It was going fast — drop by drop. What ordinarily would have lasted six hours would now

go in slightly over one-half the time. Calder held his breath, his teeth set together. It *must* last.

Ahead of him was love, love beckoning him on and on, over the swelling waves. Nothing must happen until he got there.

The steamship loomed larger and larger, as the tiny boat shot on after it. And then —

At last!

The great turbines stopped. It was evident to the captain that there was a messenger afloat. Possibly he had been informed — by some one.

As the *North Star* shot alongside, a ladder was thrown out. Calder, drenched, hatless, grasped it and clambered up the side.

Some one standing back of the curious crowd of passengers gave him a look, a look that was quite enough to set his heart singing as the cylinders had sung. And was it not for that look he had come? The captain stepped forward.

"Captain, I beg your pardon, but I have a passage engaged on your steamer — here is the ticket — and I was unavoidably detained. So I chased you up. Sorry to cause you any inconvenience, but could you kindly give my man enough gasoline to get him back to town?"

The Captain smiled good-naturedly.

"You certainly deserve that much," he said, giving orders for a ten-gallon can to be lowered over on board the heaving *North Star,* which Hobbs, game to the last, was doing his best to keep from rubbing her gray paint off on to the *Lupania.*

Calder leaned over the side of the ship, making a megaphone of his hands.

"Hobbs," he shouted.

"Yes, sir," came back from Hobbs.

"Go to Mr. Van Antler and give him my best love."

"Yes, sir."

"And Hobbs! Tell Birdseye's man not to wait — not to wait, Hobbs! you hear? I'll get fitted in London."

The Thumb Nail.*

BY WADE WARREN THAYER.

KALUA sat with his feet in the gutter, brooding over his wrongs. It was Saturday afternoon, the busiest hour of the week at the fish-market but Kalua was oblivious of the noise and turmoil about him; the vociferations of the Chinese hawkers, the laughter and chatter of the gaily dressed throng that moved among the stalls, passed all unheeded.

Across the way was Laka, the man whom Kalua most hated in all the world. He was leaning on the counter of a fish stall, clad in his Saturday afternoon best, silk shirt, duck trousers, a yellow handkerchief about his neck, a Panama hat circled with a *lei* of scarlet carnations perched jauntily on the back of his head. He was chatting gaily with Manu, the girl whom Kalua had wooed persistently, but in vain for more than a year. Laka was a good-looking young fellow, and the girl knew it, for she rolled her great brown eyes up at him now and then in a most flirtatious and fascinating fashion.

Presently she noticed Kalua glowering at her from the opposite gutter and she whispered something to her companion that made him guffaw loudly. Just at that instant one of the Chinese fish vendors, who had been scrubbing out his stall, emptied into the gutter a huge tubful of muddy water. It washed down upon the unfortunate Kalua, and before he realized it he was up to his knees in the filthy flood.

The pair across the street witnessed the incident and exploded with laughter, while poor Kalua rose to his feet, trembling with fury, and stumbled off down the street towards the water-front.

Before he had gone a block he was overtaken by a queer little weazened old man who had been pattering along in pursuit.

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His garb was startlingly incongruous, for he wore a tall silk hat, much battered, an ancient frock coat, dungaree trousers, and no shirt, nor shoes, nor stockings. He was bent with age and rheumatism, and he progressed with the aid of a cane.

"Wait a bit, Kalua," he wheezed, as he drew alongside. "I want to talk to you, and you go so fast I cannot keep pace with you."

So violent was the storm of rage that seethed within the younger man that his first impulse was to turn upon the newcomer and vent upon him the fury that possessed him. But as soon as he saw who it was that had accosted him he stopped in his tracks and almost turned as though to flee. The old man cackled with laughter as he saw the sudden look of fear in Kalua's eyes.

"Afraid of me, are you?" he shrilled, peering up at Kalua from under bushy white eyebrows. "You have no need to be. I am your very good friend."

"I — I know you are," stuttered Kalua. "I am not afraid of you. Why should I be?"

But he was afraid, horribly afraid, for old Hopu was known through all Honolulu, from Kaimuki to Moanalua, as the most powerful *kahuna* on the Island, one whose knowledge of the dread arts of the *anaana,* or praying to death, was most profound. He was a man to be feared and shunned; only to be sought when sickness or death hovered near, or when one's enemy —

Kalua's heart almost stopped beating as the coincidence burst upon him. All the rage which his fear of the old man had driven from his mind welled up in him again. His eyes lost the furtive look of intended flight and he glanced back towards the fish-market. He could see that Manu now wore about her pretty neck the wreath of carnations which had adorned Laka's hat. Kalua gritted his teeth at the sight.

"I came at the right time, did I not?" said the old man, following Kalua's glance and reading his thoughts. "Come with me, and I will show you what to do. I saw it all there at the fish-market. He's stolen away your girl, hasn't he? He is younger and handsomer than you, you see, and that's what the girls like."

Down to the wharf they went, and the old fellow artfully fed

the fires of Kalua's rage as they walked, comparing his thin, gaunt face and ungainly figure with Laka's, until Kalua writhed with impotent fury.

Seated in a secluded corner of the wharf, where an ancient anchor sheltered them from view shorewards, and the wavelets of the harbor lapped the piles at their feet, the old man proceeded to business.

"If I rid you of your rival, what do I get?" he asked.

Kalua was rich, from the native viewpoint, for he had a house of his own in the fishing village of Puuloa; none of your grass huts, dirt floored and squalid, but a wooden house, with a shingled roof and a veranda across its front. And besides he had two canoes and a huge seine capable of landing a thousand mullet at one haul.

Kalua grew cautious as he saw the light of cupidity in the old man's beady eyes.

"I'll give you this as a fee in advance," he offered, drawing forth from the pocket of his coat a square bottle of gin.

Hopu took the bottle, uncorked it skilfully and drained off a long gurgling draught. Then he passed it back to Kalua.

"That is very good as far it goes," he said, wiping his lips with the back of his hand. "But am I a mere low, drunken *kanaka*, do you think, to be bought with a square-face of gin? I don't believe you love Manu after all. I must be going."

He rose painfully, but Kalua put out a detaining hand.

"Stay, I was but playing with you," he said. "The gin will do to drink as we talk. What do you want for this great service you are going to do me?"

"Your new canoe," Hopu replied, quickly. "The one which outsailed them all on Regatta Day and took the prize. That is what I wish, and for it I promise you you shall be rid forever of that fat young thief who has stolen your Manu."

"What, my new canoe?" cried Kalua. "My new canoe, that I made with my own hands? Oh, no, I cannot give you that."

Months and months he had worked over that canoe. It was made from a single great *Koa* trunk and painfully hewed out and hollowed by hand. Infinite toil it had required, toil such as a *kanaka* will bestow on nothing else. And now, when the canoe

was barely launched, when he was fresh from his victory at the Regatta Races over all the native fishermen, he must part with it. He could not bear the thought and he groaned aloud.

"This young man is not very much in love," soliloquized the crafty Hopu. "He cares for his canoe more than for the maid he would take to his bosom. He is not worthy of my help. I'll go away and leave him and his gin bottle."

"No, no, don't go," cried Kalua, "I'll give you anything but that, anything but my beloved canoe."

Long they haggled, the old man adhering inexorably to his first price, and Kalua expostulating and pleading to save his choicest possession. The sun sank over the harbor; the tall ships cast long shadows on the still waters, and the green hills back of the city were flooded with the light of evening. But finally, as was inevitable, the old man had his way, and the bargain was struck.

In the gathering gloom of the quick tropic night Hopu whispered into Kalua's ear the plan by which he should rid himself of his enemy. Kalua's breath came short as he listened and his eyes widened, and now and then he looked fearfully over his shoulder. But as the wily old man developed his scheme, playing the while dexterously upon his victim's hatred of Laka and extolling the virtues and the charms of the beautiful Manu, Kalua's heart grew bolder. Finally he rose and with a mighty oath vowed that he would do it. The gin bottle was again brought forth and each in turn pledged the success of their plan and the early discomfiture of Laka.

The next Saturday evening there was a great political *luau* (feast) at the fishing village. It was held in a palm-thatched pavilion specially erected for the purpose and all Puuloa was invited. Laka was there and so was Manu, the belle of the evening, garbed in a flowing white *holoku* and adorned with a beautiful *lei* of roses. Kalua came also; a very different Kalua from the one who had sat in the gutter at the fish-market the week before, for he was all in white linen, and his tall figure loomed with something of distinction among the guests. The pretty Manu, always a flirt, was nice to him, and chatted impartially with him and with Laka, who was always at her side. But not by word nor

sign did Kalua show the hatred he felt for his handsome, reckless young rival.

During the preliminary speechmaking the three strolled amicably together through the throngs that surrounded the platform in the palm grove where the native orators held forth, and there was much whispering and nodding of heads among the women and young girls, for the rivals were not wont to be so friendly.

As the night fell, torches were lighted about the pavilion and the guests flocked thither and squatted in rows around the long mat upon which the edibles were spread. Every delicacy beloved by the Hawaiian was there in bountiful profusion; pig roasted underground, fresh caught mullet baked in *ki* leaves, chicken, squid, dried *limu* or seaweed, sauce of Kukui and cocoanuts, and all sorts of drinkables, *okolehao* and *awa,* gin, and even American beer. At every other place at the board was a great calabash of *poi,* that delectable paste made from the root of the taro plant, which answers for bread and butter, vegetables and dessert to the Hawaiian.

As they came to their places Kalua was able by a skilful move to seat himself beside Laka so that they two should eat from the same *poi* bowl. If Laka noticed it he gave no sign, although he had fully intended that he should share his calabash with Manu. But the seat on her other side was taken and Laka was forced to be content. Not so with Manu; she had seen the maneuvering of Kalua, and she was angry and suspicious.

Scarcely were they seated than Kalua, obeying the instructions given him by the old *kahuna,* swept his hand, thumb down, carelessly across the calabash of *poi* at Laka's side. Only Manu saw him do it. For a bare second she did not comprehend. Then her whole body stiffened with sudden fear and just as Laka was about to dip his fingers into the *poi* she leaped to her feet, snatched the *poi* bowl from under his hand and flung it from her so that it rolled down almost the length of the pavilion.

"The thumb nail, the thumb nail," she screamed, pointing with a shaking finger to where the calabash lay, overturned, its viscid contents slowly oozing out upon the ground. A small dog, one of many which ran at will among the guests, had leaped upon the *poi* bowl as it fell, and lapped eagerly at the spilled

paste. But only for a moment; then he slowly raised his head, gazed about with a frightened, uncertain air and with one sharp agonized yelp he rolled upon his side. A single strong shudder shook his body and he was dead.

"The thumb nail, the thumb nail," shrieked Manu again, and her quivering finger swung from the poor little dead dog to the shrinking figure of Kalua. His gaunt brown face had blanched to whiteness and he seemed to shrivel into a very thin, very small, very old, old man, as the accusing finger centered upon him and all the eyes of the excited, craning feasters were turned towards him.

"He did it ; I saw him," cried Manu, her whole body shaking with the frenzy of her fear. "He tried to poison Laka. I saw him do it. Like this," and she swept her hand, thumb down, through the air in a dramatic gesture. "The thumb nail. I saw him with old Hopu, the *kahuna,* last week. He tried to poison Laka."

A thrill of horror swept over the throng. They had all heard from their infancy the tales of a subtle, almost unknown powder, made from a rare herb found only in the most inaccessible spots in the hills, and how a single grain, spread in a bowl of *poi* might kill a multitude. And the ancient tale of the old *alii* (chief) who dispatched the retainers of whom he wearied by depositing in their *poi,* from his thumb nail, a grain of this poison, came back to them.

Manu's words were still ringing in their ears when Kalua, as if hypnotized by the pointed finger of the girl, rose slowly to his feet and stretched out his hands imploringly to her. But she turned away with a shudder of disgust and fell beside Laka.

Slowly Kalua's arms dropped to his side and his eyes traveled over the hostile faces about him. They rested finally upon the group beside him. Manu lay in Laka's arms, weeping violently, one arm about his neck. Only a moment did Kalua look down upon them. Then he slowly raised his right hand to his lips and touched them. It was almost like a salutation, and no one moved as he backed from the circle of light thrown by the flaring torches, and turning, fell prone in the outer darkness beyond.

An Eye for an Eye.*

BY ALBERT F. BONNEY.

HAD the long-eared animal with the proud strain of Spanish in his blood been possessed of the faculty of speech, he would have asserted that the small sheet of paper he had just found was a dainty bit of dessert with which to supplement the coarse food he had rustled in the wilderness of sand which was his home, and he resented with energetic shaking of his stubborn little head the familiarity of his master, who would rob him of the tid-bit.

"Let me see it, Beelzebub," the man coaxed, hanging on to one of the animal's long ears. "I'll give it back to you — honest I will."

Whether the animal understood, or only yielded to force, he lost the paper, when the man read:

$10,000 REWARD.

The above reward will be paid for the arrest, dead or alive, of one Samuel Carouthers, wanted on the charge of murder, providing that he is not so mutilated but that he can be identified. He is 5 ft. 10 in. tall, brown hair, hazel eyes, smooth face, and when last seen wore a suit of gray clothes, tailor-made, but old.

TOM TURNER, Sheriff.

"Hum," mused the man, as he strolled back to his cabin, studying the circular — "$10,000. A tidy sum for a man that is down to his last quart of beans and last pound of bacon — a very tidy sum — and I wish I could see Samuel long enough to get the 'drop' on him." He finished his soliloquy as he stepped into the cabin and laid the circular on his bunk, and then began getting his evening meal, which had grown frugal from scarcity

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of supplies. He sang as he worked, snatches of old, almost forgotten songs he had learned at his mother's knee, interspersed with others of more recent memory, all the time thinking of the price on Samuel Carouthers' head.

A rattle of pony's hoofs on the rocky trail sent him to the door, to see the man of his thoughts slip off his pony's back, and his heart pinched in his body when he realized that his pistol was hanging in its scabbard on the wall behind him, for the swift glance the stranger cast at his hip meant that he had read recognition in his eyes. The startled man steadied his voice as well as he could:

"Come in, stranger," he said cordially. The man stripped the saddle from his horse, threw it against the cabin wall, and then followed his host inside. "You look tired," he added, as the man sank wearily to a seat.

"I am," replied the traveler gruffly.

"Ride far to-day?" This was said with a faint hope that perhaps, after all, the man did not suspect.

"Yes."

It being hard to keep up a conversation when the other would not talk, the host finished getting supper.

"Sit up, if you are hungry," he said, his tone grown a trifle gruff in sympathy with his guest's moroseness and taciturnity, when the man fell to with a vigor which told of famine.

Once during the meal the owner of the cabin got up to get water, going close to where his belt hung, glancing stealthily back to see if there was any chance of getting the drop he longed for, to see the other eying him, hand close to pistol. Returning to his seat, he decided to end the matter and so said:

"I know you, Carouthers, but I am not fool enough to try to earn the reward with you on to me. So eat,— then hit the trail. Not but what you are welcome enough," he added, hastily, noting the look of sadness which swept over the man's face, "but, well, your reputation is not conducive to sound sleep," he concluded, smiling grimly.

The murderer ate in silence until satisfied, slowly filled his pipe from the box the other passed to him, smoked for a time in silence, and then said, his voice weary and broken:

"That meal," pointing to the few remaining victuals on the rude table, "is the first food I have tasted in thirty hours, and from very hunger I was about willing to give myself up, but now," — he stretched out his arms,— "I am ready to continue my fight for life." He refilled his pipe, and when it was burning freely continued:

"I am going to tell you my story, and then if you wish, you may claim the reward offered for my life. However," — with a hard setting of his jaws,— "you will deliver a dead man, for I shall kill myself first. Life in a prison would drive me crazy in a month. You, who have lived the free life of the hills, know, and can understand.

"Seven short years ago I was careless and as happy as any man that had ever lived. I had a beautiful home, and in it lived with me the sweetest, most beautiful and the dearest woman in all the world. Had any one told me that sin and sorrow could ever enter there, I should have laughed him to scorn, yet — "

The other man pulled a flask from between two of the stones composing the cabin wall, shook it between himself and the fading light and seeing that it yet contained a goodly portion of fluid, passed it to the hunted man, who put it to his lips.

"I had been married a year," he continued, "when, returning home after a week's absence, I found the house deserted. I had noticed that the townfolk looked at me queerly as I passed them on the street, but I was too much in a hurry to pay attention, and soon I understood all, for I found a letter. God! such a letter!" he cried, clenching his hands.

"I do not know all I did in the week which followed. When I recovered my reason I was in a hospital bed. In time I found that I had burned my home and murderously assaulted some of my dearest friends — But the letter! The letter!" His eyes glowed red in the gloom.

"She told me that, as a girl of fifteen, she had yielded to a man, that after a time he had tired of her, and as the years fled she hoped that he had forgotten her, believed that her love for him was dead. How that he had come to her the day after I left—" He sprang to his feet and paced the floor with swift strides.

"My — the woman — died in a year, again deserted by the devil who had ruined our lives, died by her own hand, on her father's doorstep, and in her bosom was an ivory miniature of a man as handsome as Lucifer. This was sent to me, with a brief letter she had written for me, begging forgiveness, and I swore by the memory of my love that I would hunt the man down.

"It is not enough that the man is dead — I? Yes, I killed him. Killed him!" he repeated fiercely.

"I turned everything into money, a large sum it was, and then I started on my hunt. I found traces of him in various places — Mexico, Australia — and finally found him in Nogales, Arizona, where he was proprietor of a popular and flourishing gambling house.

"I killed him." This time he said it calmly and slowly, his voice as hard and cold as steel. "He did not know me, never having seen me, so I had no trouble enticing him into the mountains to look at a mine." He laughed. "There I bound him while he slept.

"I tried to make him suffer some of the agony that had torn my heart before I despatched him." He stopped abruptly, unbuckled his belt, and threw it, with the pistol it held, to the floor. "I do not know as I care to live longer," he said dully, "and if you need the money — "

The owner of Beelzebub sprang to his feet with working features, snatched the circular from the bed and placed it on the knee of the other man, who sat with bowed head, neither moving nor looking up.

"I thought I wanted this money, Sam," he said, "but now —" he tore the paper into bits, which he dropped into the fire. "I never saw the offer of reward," he declared with a harsh chuckle. "Now, you can go, or stay, as you choose." A look of something akin to thankfulness swept the man's haggard face.

"Let me finish the story," he said. "On the man's body I found a large sum of money. I do not know why I carried it away, as I have enough of my own, yet I took it. Perhaps you can use it?" And he threw a package upon the table.

The owner of the cabin nodded, looking at the money eagerly.

"I was now careless of life, and I returned to Nogales, where I stayed until about the time the man's body was found. I had thought to stand trial, but the fellow was a general favorite there, and, considering that I had taken the money, I felt certain that lynch-law would be my portion of justice, so I fled. Of course I was accused." He arose and yawned. "That's all. Now I'll sleep awhile, then I'll go, for I know Turner is on my trail," and he threw himself down and was soon sleeping soundly.

When morning came the miner sat smoking in front of his cabin, casting frequent watchful glances at the trail which led to the cabin, to presently see a quartet of horsemen struggling up. When they arrived at his door he greeted them cheerfully.

"Light and look at your saddles, gents," he said, heartily. "You are out early, are you not?"

"I'm sheriff of this county, my name is Turner," said a medium-sized man with a square jaw, "and I am looking for — here," shoving a copy of the reward circular into his hand. The miner pretended to read it, thinking that minutes were precious to the fleeing man, and finally passed the paper back to the officer.

"Well?" he drawled.

"See anything of him?" asked the sheriff laconically.

"Yep."

"When? Where?" Fatigue forgotten, the men sprang to their horses.

"Last night, about ten," he replied.

"Did he stop? Where is he? Which way did he go?" The questions came fast.

"He hit the trail for Utah, I guess," said the miner slowly, "leastwise, he went north — borrowed one of my horses. The best one," he added savagely. "Won't you chew on something before you go?"

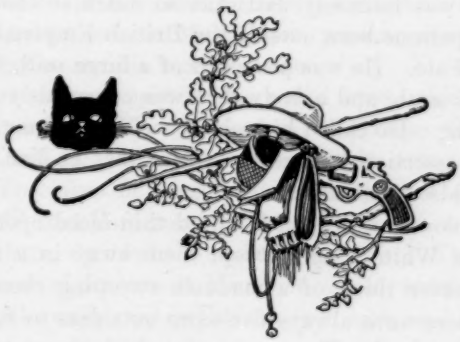
"We ate back at the Bar-T," said Turner, as the men began tightening cinches.

"Well, so long."

Presently the sound of their horses' hoofs was lost in the distance. Filling his pipe deliberately, and lighting it carefully, the miner strolled to where his pony was rubbing noses with his

long-eared friend, Beelzebub. The man put his arm over his horse's neck.

"That was a fine trail you made toward the Land of Many Wives, pard," he said, fumbling a big roll of bills in his pocket, "a fine, plain trail. It may be you did wrong to fool Tom Turner that way, but I'll gamble that at the judgment the Good Lord will say: 'It's all right, Pard, no harm done. You just run over there and play with the lambs awhile.'"



The Peculiar Affair of John Bluggin.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

HEN an inquisitive foreigner, in the pursuit of knowledge, once asked a British general to tell him the secret of England's greatness, the military person tugged nervously at his moustache, stared for a long time at the horizon, and then, with the air of a man who has made up his mind to tell the truth at any cost, remarked quietly: "Most Englishmen have no damned respect for anything that isn't English."

The little incident forms a fitting introductory to this story, which concerns an Englishman of the type the general alluded to. His name was Bluggin — John Bluggin — and he lived in Manchester. He was intensely patriotic, so much so that he considered that all persons born outside the British Empire had a grievance against Fate. He was possessed of a large mill, the imagination of a rock crab, and a body that was enormously fat and unhealthy looking. He called himself a "self-made man," and when he made the assertion he was not aware that he lied. That was the fault of his imagination.

In his employ were fifteen hundred thin-faced operatives. Occasionally the White Plague swept them away in a manner that made an observer think of a madman sweeping checkers from a board, but there were always five-score outsiders to fight for each vacancy thus created. The manner in which these starving work-seekers fought for the vacancies in Bluggin's Mills filled Bluggin's soul with pride. He knew that he was a Pillar of Trade, a Prop of Commerce, a Captain of Industry, or whatever flattersome epithet the stupid press uses to designate those who grow fat by dealing in flesh and blood.

Manchester respected Bluggin. The white-faced operatives

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bared their heads in his presence, the police saluted him respectfully, and the magistrates dealt leniently with a Bluggin's mill hand arrested for drunkenness if Bluggin sent a note stating that the hand was a good worker in working hours. That was the Bluggin standard of respectability for the poor. If they measured up to that, they were sure of twelve shillings a week till they died of consumption or got mangled up in the machinery. Consumption had a bigger score than the whirling fly-wheels and clutching belts. Bacilli made easy conquests when they attacked persons who lived on dry bread and bloaters.

Now, Fate works in a fearful and wonderful way. An Anglo-Indian from Pondicherry, who suffered much with an unruly liver, came home to Manchester to recruit his health, and he was introduced to the club which Bluggin favored with his presence. It was a vulgar club, with an extensive membership of vulgar persons, who did not know they were vulgar, because they were so rich that no one in Manchester dared to tell them the truth. As they seldom went outside Manchester, persons who did not know how rich they were didn't get a chance.

India was the one spot in the world upon which Bluggin desired information. He spoke of it as "Hour Great Hindian Hempire," and he had a dim idea that it occupied nine-tenths of Asia. Therefore he tormented the health seeker with stupid questions, till that unfortunate, who hated India as only a livery person can hate, dreaded the sight of Bluggin. The cotton magnate became a nightmare to him. In dining-room and smoking-room the mill owner swooped down upon him, and the man from Pondicherry became as vicious as a red-necked cobra. He contemplated revenge, and the murderous form suggested by his mind will give the imaginative some idea of his sufferings. After long and careful examination of Bluggin's short, fat neck, bloodshot eyes and overfed body, he set about inducing him to visit India. Bluggin laughed at the suggestion, but the Anglo-Indian was persistent. His hate-moved tongue argued for seven days, and painted such wonderful pictures of the Orient that Bluggin decided to view the "Hempire." The liver-afflicted one shook the flabby hand of his tormentor, told him to take good care of himself during the trip, and then ordered a Scotch.

"The coarse pig!" he muttered savagely. "The fat pig with his stories of his fifteen hundred slaves has spoiled my holiday, but if I know the difference between bubonic plague and ophthalmia, that heart of his will fail him before he sights Bombay, and a bull-nosed shark will play football with his carcass on the bottom of the Indian Ocean!

But the Anglo-Indian's prophecy about Bluggin's heart did not come true in the manner he prophesied. On the way out, the cotton magnate sweltered like a jellyfish stranded on a shingle beach, but he survived, and immediately upon his arrival started to prove the truth of the military man's remark mentioned in the beginning of this story. Although he would have walked reverently in the dog's cemetery at Notting Hill, and listened attentively to the caretaker's stories of pampered pets of princesses that reposed beneath the stone slabs, he laughed loudly and tramped heavily in the presence of gods that were old before the Druids erected their altars at Stonehenge. He put his fat, perspiring hands on sacred stones that should not be touched by the unbeliever. He trod in places where only those cleansed by lives of abstinence were allowed to walk, and when he was pushed back by lean, brown hands, he gurgled objections, and did not see the hate in the black eyes that guarded the sacred places. Bluggin had been in the habit of tramping wherever he liked, and he belonged to that unimaginative class of Englishmen that only receive information through their ears.

He told those of his countrymen whom he met that he was deriving much enjoyment from watching "these 'ere bloomin' niggers an' their hidolatrous tricks," and the countrymen, because they were a long time in the land, felt ashamed of Bluggin. Some pitied him, many cursed him. The latter had their wives and families in India, and they understood the menace to the lives of their loved ones that the dull-brain and coarse manners of the tourists of the Bluggin type created.

"A dozen hogs like him could make another mutiny that would push us fellows into the Indian Ocean," said a suntanned officer, and his weary-eyed second in command nodded as he watched the fat figure of the Prop of Commerce roll down the path.

Bluggin was in Radjiput when the breath of an early summer

told him that it was time to return to his native land. An Indian summer is dangerous to an overfed man coming from a country where a fog pall hides the sun for ten months of the year. The man from Pondicherry knew this, and Bluggin realized it when the heat had developed a rash, sharpened his temper and made his breathing more difficult. He determined to hurry, but Fate pushed a dozen obstacles in his path. He had strayed a long way from the railway line, his servants, tired of his abusive tongue, deserted him, and on the day that this peculiar happening took place, he was traveling in an ox cart over a blood-colored road that stretched like a red gash through a desolate landscape.

On either side of the track lay white plains, bare and naked under the sparkling lances of a yellow sun. The plain looked weird and deathlike. Sportive puffs of hot air gathered up handfuls of the red dust, and made ghostly wraiths that danced rigadoons across the wind-blown wastes, and Bluggin shuddered. He possessed little imagination, but on that afternoon his beefy body was invaded by a spark that made him wonderfully cognizant of the Spirit of Decay that hovered over the land.

"Bah," he growled, "the place is rotten. Give me Hingland! Give me Manchester, an' the roar of the mills, an' the perlice, an' respectful servants an' things like that."

A cold shiver passed through his bulky frame, and reaching through the front of the cart he prodded the naked, bronze-hued driver with his red forefinger.

"Hi, Sambo," he gurgled, "how long will we be getting to town?"

The Pathan turned an impassive face and raised four fingers which resembled dry twigs, and Bluggin cursed him for not putting the answer in words.

"'Bout time orl these nigs learned to speak Hinglish," he muttered; "we've been long enough bossin' 'em."

The confined space in which he sprawled, and the continual jolting as the driver flogged his weary cattle, did not tend to soothe nerves frayed by the intense heat. The naked white plain — indecent in its nakedness — made his bloodshot eyes bulge curiously from the mounds of red flesh. The hot air, carrying charges of the powdered dust, whipped his face like a mil-

lion lashes, and, for the first time during the trip, he cursed the seductive tongue of the Anglo-Indian that sent him wandering into the East.

A cupola appeared above the shoulder of a bare hill cut by the red road, and Bluggin noted it with a sigh of relief. The unbroken stretch of dusty plain had stirred unwholesome visions. He felt that he was crushed between the hot, heavy atmosphere and the gaunt wastes. As the cart drew nearer he saw that the cupola was the top of a ruined temple, and again he prodded the driver and directed him to drive towards it.

"Hi will 'ave a snooze in the shade for an 'our," he muttered. "This 'ere 'eat 'as got hall the blood in my body churnin' round in an 'ell of an 'urry."

The temple was in an advanced state of decay. Red blotches, resembling patches of blood, showed upon the crumbling stonework, and the bodies of many of the squat stone gods were half covered with the dead dust that had drifted up from the plain. The half-buried gods looked ghastly — something like Congo natives undergoing the sand-bath torture. Bluggin stared at them with his bloodshot eyes, and the deities stared back with wide eyes that never closed. It was seldom that they were visited by anything of the Bluggin type. They sat in peace, far away from the track usually followed by the tweed-garbed tourist with the red face and vulgar curiosity.

A swarm of sacred parrots rose noisily from the ruins as the cart drew up near the time-worn pillars. Lizards ran into hiding places, while bats, startled by the cries of the parrots, flew out of the dark arches and wheeled stupidly in the blinding glare of the sun. Bluggin dismounted, and the driver, after guiding his team into a strip of shadow, curled himself up and went to sleep, utterly indifferent to the movements of his fare. The cotton magnate staggered for a moment when he reached the ground, and, with a nervous shudder, he wiped his red face. The earth writhed under the vicious rays of the sickly sun.

But the gods amused Bluggin, and for a moment he forgot to curse the Anglo-Indian and the "Hempire." The chipped deities made him think of his own enlightenment and position, and pride of race welled within him. He put his moist hand on

the smooth head of a god that had the eyes of a bull, and he patted him affectionately.

"Queer ole beggar you are," he gurgled. "Hif Hi 'ad yer at Manchester Hi'd fix yer hup on the gravel path leadin' to the 'ot 'ouses."

The nightmare in stone gave no sign that he was pleased with the suggestion, and Bluggin wandered on. He viewed each deity critically and pondered over the ignorance of the people that worshipped them in spite of the efforts of the missionaries. Now and then he emitted a loud guffaw as he stared at the contorted figure of a god — upon one statue he spat in disgust. The pose of the deity offended his British taste. The stone figure was not a model of decency, but Bluggin had no right to express his disapprobation in such a coarse manner.

While staring at the sculptured stone, an idea came to him.

"Hi know wot Hi'd do hif Hi was runnin' this 'ere country," he soliloquized. "Hi would ship orl of these 'ere hidolatrous things to Hingland an' sell 'em to gentlemen of means like myself to put in their gardens — that is, the decent ones."

The latter part of the remark applied to the gods, not to the gentlemen of means, and Bluggin spurned the offending deity with his boot as he passed on.

"Now this old 'geezer,'" he continued, sitting down upon a horned god and contemplating one opposite that had a half-drunken leer showing on its rough-hewn face; "hif 'e wos knockin' around the garden path when Hi came 'ome late from the club Hi'd feel inclined to run hout an' take the pledge."

He laughed immoderately at his small joke, and the dark arches flung back the echoes. The air was thick. It seemed to obstruct Bluggin's path, and he breathed heavily.

"By Jove, hit's 'ot," he murmured, "an' 'ere Hi ham wastin' time talkin' to these 'ere things when Hi might be sleepin'."

Immediately in front of him was the hideous form of Ganesa, the elephant-headed god, and before the figure was a long smooth stone slab — the sacrificial slab of other days — that felt icy cold to the perspiring fingers of the man from Manchester.

"Hif you've no hobjection to me usin' yer table as a bunk Hi'll 'ave a nap," he gurgled, and after hanging his puggaree-

swathed helmet upon the god's ear, he winked at the hideous face and was soon asleep.

The sun was nearing the horizon when Bluggin was awakened by a gentle tapping on his nose. Bluggin's nose was sunburnt and therefore sensitive. Thinking it was a fly he snorted angrily without opening his eyes, but the gentle tapping continued, and he looked for the cause. Sitting on each side of him were two monkeys, solemn, wise-looking creatures, that blinked inquiringly when the mill owner looked up at them. At his feet were four more, while many others, comprising the younger members of the family that had taken up its abode within the ruins, squatted round, silent and questioning.

Bluggin stared stupidly. The blood chug-chugged unpleasantly up the sides of his fat neck, and he made an attempt to lift his head. A white-whiskered monkey, on his right hand, put a paw on his throat and pushed him back. Bluggin snorted indignantly and made another effort, but once again the ape restrained him. Bluggin attempted to shout out, and at that moment a horrible feeling passed over him. The blood swirled in his head like a maelstrom. His heart thumped his ribs viciously. There was a peculiar spasmodic twitching of his limbs, then a mist came up before his eyes, and he became unconscious.

When his senses returned to him after a long interval, the monkeys were still sitting round him watching his fat form. The shadows had lengthened perceptibly, and the stone deities seemed to be growing larger as the light decreased. Bluggin felt uncomfortable. He wondered stupidly why he had not stood up and scattered the monkeys before he swooned away so unaccountably. He loathed monkeys, and he ordered his right hand to smack the insolent old white-whiskered ape in the face, but he was astounded to find that he could not lift the limb. He tried to use his left arm and found that it was in the same condition. The blood rioted through his head as he tried to comprehend what had happened. His brain attempted to signal his feet to kick the silent watchers sitting at the foot of the slab, but his feet did not move. Bluggin was horribly conscious of his position, his brain was able to grasp the surroundings, but his body was paralyzed. The heat, together with the excitement produced

by the sudden awakening and the nearness of a number of animals that he loathed, had brought about a slight paralytic stroke, and he had lost control of his limbs.

He tried to shout out to the sleeping Pathan, who had not ventured within the sacred edifice, but curious throaty gurgles were the only sounds that came from his mouth. The monkeys looked inquiringly at each other as Bluggin continued to make the weird sounds, while two or three of the younger apes were so amused that they threw back somersaults till they were rebuked by their solemn elders. The silence was horrible. The falling of a pebble, or the rustling of a wing in the dark arches, started echoes that went rushing out over the plain. The ticking of Bluggin's watch sounded like the blows of a monster sledge hammer.

After a time the monkeys became inquisitive about the ticking of the chronometer. The gray elder, sitting at Bluggin's right hand, raised a forepaw and kept time to the ticking by beating the air, looking at the others while he did so as if seeking an elucidation of the mystery. The noise puzzled gray-beard. The others either stared blankly to express their ignorance, or, bending over the fat body of the Englishman, tried to locate the unusual sounds. They felt nervously round his breast and prodded him in the ribs, taking little notice of his gurgled protests. The cotton magnate's plight was pitiable. At last a keen-eared ape discovered the hundred-guinea timepiece and handed it over to the ancient monkey in charge of the proceedings. The gray-whiskered one picked up a stone with the evident intention of cracking the watch, but, changing his mind, he hung it round the neck of the god that Bluggin had spat upon before going to sleep. Bluggin sweltered. He saw the action and listened terror-stricken to the significant chattering that greeted it. The apes had evidently watched his arrival from the shadows of the temple, noted the act of desecration, and the gift of the watch to the outraged god was viewed by them as a slight recompense for the indignity put upon him by the fat intruder. The god with the drunken leer upon his face, that the cotton man thought of shipping to Manchester, looked across as if he were enjoying the situation, and as the gloom increased, the others towered up in

a manner that made Bluggin think they were rising from the ground. Not a sound disturbed the stillness. The monkeys moved without noise, and the Englishman's mind pictured a monster uplifted hand that turned away the faint sighing of the breeze that came from the dead plain where the winds rioted.

The last ray of the declining sun crept nervously through a narrow slit in the temple wall, and fell like a bar of gold across the monstrous head of Ganesa. Bluggin shuddered. The ray resembled a bloodstained rapier poised above him. Curious visions danced up before his disordered mind. He thought he heard the whirr of the looms — the laughter and chattering in the club — ten thousand miles away. Before the bulging eyes that stared at the silent apes, flitted ghostly forms of white-faced operatives that mocked his plight. He tried to argue with himself. Why was he there? Why had he come out to that dead land? He was John Bluggin of Manchester, a Pillar of Trade, a Prop of Commerce, a Captain of Industry, a living example of British Honesty, Integrity and Enterprise, yet he lay helpless on the knees of Ganesa while a family of apes sat amused at his gibberings. He speculated stupidly on the end, and shuddered at the result of those speculations.

More apes entered the temple. The regular residents rushed them forward to the stone slab and chattered explanations, and Bluggin concluded that messengers had gone out to fetch all the apes in the district so that they might view him. They gathered round him, chattering wildly. They peered into his face with round blinking eyes. They patted his cheeks affectionately and pulled his sunburnt nose till the familiarity maddened him. A paw slipped over his mouth and he bit it savagely, the ape's scream of pain producing much sympathy from his companions.

There were fully fifty apes squatting round the stone slab when the whiskered elder coughed loudly, as if calling them to attention. Again and again Bluggin made efforts to cry out, but the gurgling sounds he produced only amused the younger monkeys. The frolicsome mood of the younger apes attracted Bluggin. He noted a peculiar joyful expectancy about their tricks and grimaces, and he wondered. His mind detected a similarity between their capers and the antics of children awaiting a circus

performance. The simile gripped him. His brain tried to reason out the resemblance, as if it had found a clue that might give a key to some impending happening.

The old ape clucked again, and the regiment ranged themselves around Bluggin, pushing and jostling each other for positions. At another signal, five score paws laid hold of his check suit and moved him along the slab till his head rested beneath the trunk of the elephant-headed god. Bluggin was on the verge of a complete mental collapse. As they hauled him along he dimly comprehended that a part of his brain was pursuing a clue that it had discovered in the likeness between the antics of the younger apes and those of expectant children. It is in moments of terror, such as Bluggin was then experiencing, that the wonderful sub-conscious brain reasons quickly and makes astonishing deductions. Bluggin knew nothing of the worship tendered to the different deities — at least he thought he knew nothing. Now, however, the sub-conscious mind discovered that there was but one god to whom the Brahmins made living sacrifices. Somebody must have told him, but Bluggin was astonished at the sub-conscious bringing forward the information at that moment. But what are the younger monkeys so jubilant about, asked the conscious! Why? The answer seemed to be whispered in some mysterious depths of his soul, and he slobbered helplessly. He was before Ganesa, the terrible elephant-headed deity, and it was to Ganesa that live animals were sacrificed! He realized what his fate would be. The weird apes had watched the priests sacrificing goats to the horrible god, and with terrifying mimicry they intended to offer Bluggin of Manchester!

The skin on the head of the cotton magnate prickled. The blood seemed to spout through his veins. The detestable whiskered faces closed in around him. He thought of his greatness. His mind chanted the litany of fulsome epithets that had been bestowed upon him by a servile press. Insane with terror, he tried to mumble them to the apes, but they were too busy bowing and prostrating themselves before the god. Bluggin's throaty gurgles made a deep bass to their high-pitched chanting. The gray-whiskered elder came nearer, nearer. He bowed low to Ganesa, and pointed to Bluggin, and the Englishman saw some-

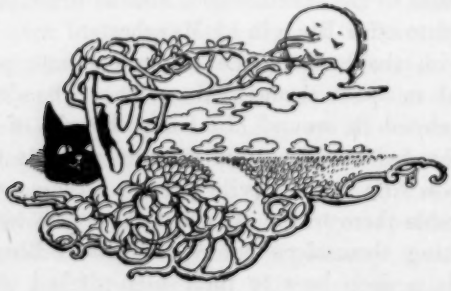
thing bright flash in the outstretched paw. He made another desperate effort to cry out. He felt the ape's breath, he felt the horrible whiskers on his cheek, something cold touched his fat neck and he swooned. Then a wild Pathan yell woke the echoes of the temple, and the apes fled.

The driver had come to search for his fare.

Bluggin talked for three hours after he recovered consciousness in the little village to which the driver hurried him, and in that three hours he told all. Then his speech failed him again, and they hurried him with relays of bearers to the railway station, and rushed him down to the coast. Still stretched upon a bed they took him aboard a homeward-bound steamer, but the doctors shook their heads and whispered together.

And their forebodings proved true. As the steamer swung down towards Ceylon, Bluggin passed away, and near the entrance of Palk Strait they tipped his corpse into the warm waters of the Bay of Bengal. And if the reader will look at the map he will see that Palk Strait is very close to Pondicherry, from which town came the Anglo-Indian with the bad liver who had started Bluggin off to see "Hour Great Hindian Hempire."

And, curious to relate, the fifteen hundred white-faced operatives were not sorry to hear of his death. A spendthrift nephew of Bluggin inherited all the mill owner's property, and in a wild burst of joy at receiving what he never expected, he raised each slave's wages two shillings a week!



The Price of Hate.*

BY LEROY WALLINGFORD.

CHALMERS moved hurriedly out of the path of a wave that swept proudly over the damp mark made by its predecessor, and the wave gurgled pleasantly as if amused at the beachcomber's haste. The movement aroused Delcroix, and he followed the example of his partner by rolling over the hot sand as the tide crept stealthily in.

The silence was intense. It seemed to rise out of the panting ocean, a smothering influence that choked the weird notes of the wood pigeons and hushed the cicadas that sent shrill, needle-like noises from the green masses over which the lawyer vines crept like a living net.

"Go on," murmured Delcroix; "your pauses would lead any one to think you were making up the yarn as you went along." He spoke irritably, as if the silence that flung itself upon them each time that Chalmers stopped talking had upset his nerves.

The suntanned features of his companion wrinkled into a cynical sneer.

"Perhaps I am making it up," he said, quietly. "Sometimes — sometimes when I tell it to any one like I am telling it to you, I wonder if I didn't read it in a book years ago, and just fooled myself into the belief that it happened to me."

He paused for an instant and moistened his dry lips.

"That's a lie!" he cried sharply, turning suddenly upon his companion as if he would destroy the doubt occasioned by his last remark. "This is the truth! I never think that I read it, not this yarn, Delcroix! I know that — that this thing — Where did I stop? Oh, I remember! Well, our three Kling divers nuzzled the silt near the Horse Shoe Shoal for weeks, and we piled black-lip shell into the hold by the ton. God, it was rich! We'd

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sit of a night on the deck of that old lugger while the smell of half the world's nations drifted over the tropic seas, and we'd dream of what we'd do with our profits. He'd do the picturing — that's why I hated him so much afterwards.

"I remember those nights. The darkness just sneaked down from Asia like a drifting blanket, and the yell of a Javanese from the prahu fleet would sting the silence like a whip. Ever listen to the cities calling in the night, Delcroix? Clink of glasses, kid's prattle, sound of shoes on the pavement, and the laugh of women — it just gets into your breast like an iron hand and twists your heart strings till you choke for breath."

A big wave slid forward quietly and slopped over the bare feet of the two beachcombers, and Delcroix cursed as they rolled out of its path.

"It was on one blazing hot day in September that he cut loose," continued Chalmers. "I pulled across to a whale-boat on the other side of the reef, and coming back I was just dreaming of wheat fields and orange groves two thousand miles away as I stuck the oars into that sea of melted glass. Then I sort of woke up and looked around. The old lugger was squelching down the seas, and that swine was rushing round helping the Klings to spread more cloth.

"Do you know how those little puffs of air race round in the tropics? 'God's breaths' the Orang Lauts call 'em. They hit a boat every five minutes and leave a stillness after them that gives you a cold shiver. Well, the lugger was getting those little whiffs every now and then, so I put after her. I can feel that pull now. Every ray of the yellow sun went through my back like a poisoned arrow, and the reflection on the oily waters blinded me. He could have potted me with a gun at times when I gained on the boat, but he didn't. He just raced round spreading more cloth, and just when I thought there was a chance of getting aboard, one of those little puffs would get tangled up in the sails, and the old lugger would roll away like a drunken thing.

"I don't know how far I followed him. After a time I couldn't see, but I kept on pulling. I was blinded with the glare from that red-painted ocean, and every time I dipped the oars I screamed in agony. Once I was quite near. I could hear him yelling at the crew, then he seemed to understand from my actions that I couldn't

see, and he stopped talking, and all I could hear was the creaking of the ropes as the old tub got the wind again.

"I was picked up by a trepang-laden proa bound for Macassar, and that kept me three months off his trail. It was three months of hell for me. Then I started out to beat the coast from Thursday Island to Cape Otway in search of him, and every day made me more eager.

"I thought I saw him a score of times. The swine's face sprang from my brain on to the heads of people that didn't resemble him in the slightest. Ever have that happen to you? At Keppel Bay I clutched a pearling skipper who had a beard like his, and I got a knife in the ribs for my foolishness. I met him a thousand times a day — it's truth, Delcroix. In the night I'd spring up thinking he was in the room, and then I'd go blind like I did on the day he sailed away and left me at the Horse Shoe Shoal.

"Something seemed to have pulled me to Bluemud Bay. It was the last spot I expected to find him, and when the old lugger caught my eye I couldn't believe that he was still on her. When McKay of the coal hulk told me that he still ran her, I nearly went crazy, and the hours between then and sunset were years of misery.

"I pulled over after sundown, and it was dark when I came under the bows. Things seemed to be coming my way at last. When I started to climb the chains every smell that drifted over Horse Shoe Shoal came to me again, and my brain started to dig out all the pretty little pictures that he used to paint about the times we would have in Lonsdale Street. I felt good, Delcroix.

"I got a shock when I touched the deck. A woman rose out of the shadow and caught me by the arm. 'Doctor?' she asked, and before I could answer she was leading me down the stairs to the cabin, the stairs that I had been up and down ten thousand times before. I knew then that it was him. I felt it. She took me up to the bunk, and there he was tossing in a fever and cursing in all the dialects of Polynesia.

"The doctor stunt suited me when I saw the condition he was in. The woman hadn't slept for three nights, so I sent her away and sat down to watch him. Somebody has said that the world is only a kraal, and it seemed like it to me just then. Sometimes

as I watched him I forgot all about the hunt of the previous ten months and thought we were back piling that black-lip shell into the lugger at the reef.

"About midnight he became conscious, and then he made a motion for water. It was in a bottle on the table, and it was as warm as Torres Straits on a midsummer day. Would you have given him water, Delcroix? You wouldn't! Well, I didn't like to give it to him, so I offered to sell it to him. He didn't recognize me till I told him the price. 'Ten drops of water in exchange for a pearl,' I said, and then he began to understand that Fate had run him up against something."

Delcroix laughed grimly. "A stiff price," he murmured.

"Stiff!" shrieked Chalmers. "Was it stiff? You have no imagination. Why it was a bargain sale price after what I had suffered!

"He refused to buy for two hours, and then his thirst got the better of him. I didn't think he had the grit that he showed then. His lips were black, and his curses just ran into a long gurgle because his tongue couldn't hack them into word lengths. Then I put up the price. 'Five drops for a pearl,' I said, and he nodded his head towards a black box in the corner of the cabin, and let me see that the key was under his pillow.

"There were fifty-seven beauties in the little bag, and I laid them out near the water bottle so that he could see that I was acting honest. I measured out five drops of the warm liquid and gave it to him, then I put one of the pearls back into the bag and put the bag into my pocket. He bought again in five minutes, then he bought ten drops in one lot, and then fifteen, and then twenty. Ever hear of water going at that price? But I was honest. I only took the price I had fixed, and when there was an extra large pearl I gave him good measure to make up for it.

"I cautioned him against extravagance when he bought a spoonful of the stuff in one lot, and I thought he would expire in an apoplectic fit. He spluttered that much that he lost half of his purchase, and he had to repeat the order. No goldfield shanty ever did a trade like mine that night in Bluemud Bay. D'ye think I was getting a good return for that pull after the lugger?

"He swilled the lot away inside three hours, and when he saw

the last pearl go he lost consciousness again and started to babble about the profits that he made on the trip when I had the half share. I left him then. I tiptoed quietly up the stairs and slipped down the chains into the boat. Half way across the Bay I ran into a dingy carrying the doctor from the mission schooner, and I was so darned pleased over the night's business that I directed him to the lugger which his two Kanaka boys had been trying to find for the previous three hours. Then people tell you there is no such thing as luck."

Delcroix buried his legs in the warm sand and sat looking out to sea. "What did you do with the loot?" he asked, after a long pause.

"The loot?" cried Chalmers. "I went down to Peterson's — Oh, what's the use of telling now. The loot? Damn it, it was mine! I couldn't hold it though. What did I do with it? You're an idiot, Delcroix. You're an infernal idiot!" He stood up and brushed the sand from his tattered trousers, then turned and swung down the trail towards the cluster of huts near which the beche-de-mer fleet lay at anchor. Delcroix watched him till a turn in the track hid him from his sight, then he turned over in the sand and shut his eyes.

Kate.*

BY ARTHUR R. ANDRE.

IT was Peter's fault. It always was Peter's fault when they quarreled, sighed Mrs. Gregory, as she glanced over the breakfast table to see that everything was in its appointed place. Then she raised her eyes to the clock, which registered exactly one minute to eight, and listened confidently for her husband's footsteps.

For Peter, with all his failings, was dependable. Promptly upon the stroke of eight, every day, with a cheerful, "Good morning, little woman," he would march gayly into the room, kiss her affectionately upon her upturned cheek, give her three little pats upon the shoulder — and take his place at the table.

There were times, of course, after one of their little misunderstandings, for instance, when this programme varied. Then, her husband would fling himself angrily into a chair and 'devour' his food in silence. But always by lunch-time at the very latest Peter would be himself again. And the night before, as Mrs. Gregory remembered, a trifle uneasily, the misunderstanding had been rather serious. The little bronze clock on the mantelshelf chimed out the hour as her husband entered the room, and, to all appearances, she was deeply engrossed in the columns of the morning paper.

"Good morning, Kate."

Mrs. Gregory could scarcely believe her ears. Three months and thirteen days they had been married, and in all that time Peter had never ventured to address her as Kate — plain Kate. "Good morning, Peter," she was surprised into replying and raised her eyes. He was gazing at her, smilingly it is true, *but without a trace of affection in his expression.* Mrs. Gregory fidgeted nervously for some moments with her

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newspaper, then laid it aside and buttered a slice of toast.

"It's a fine morning," said Peter, looking up from his plate.

"It is," Mrs. Gregory guardedly replied, and picked up the paper again.

But although the article on "woman's place in the home," to which she addressed herself, would, under ordinary circumstances, have completely enchained her attention, she was quite unable to fix her thoughts upon it, and she read the opening paragraph through five times as a mental discipline. Then she stole a glance at her husband across the top of the newspaper. He was eating his breakfast quite unconcernedly, and her wrath blazed out anew.

It really was Peter's fault that they had quarreled, she told herself. He had rushed into the house the night before, and, without consulting her feelings or inclinations in the matter, had picked her up and romped her around till she was fairly out of breath — after which, he had condescended to explain to her that he had made "quite a winning" in copper, as he inelegantly expressed it. She had endured that in silence; but when he started in on his tiresome plans for the future — uninteresting business affairs — and threatened to dance her about again, she was forced to speak out plainly. "I dislike to be 'pawed,' Peter," was what she said. "Pawed" wasn't elegant either, she remembered belatedly.

Her husband laid his napkin on the table, pushed back his chair, and rose to his feet.

"Good-by, Kitty," he said.

Mrs. Gregory's head bent lower. Even then she would have been willing to forgive him, if he had come around the table and had offered to kiss her — of course, in a properly penitential frame of mind. But deep down in her heart she knew that he would do nothing of the kind. The words she was reading blurred before her eyes as she heard him moving about in the hall, putting on his coat and, yes! he was humming to himself the refrain of the latest comic opera. Then his footsteps died away, and the front door closed — not violently, as when he was angry with her; nor quietly, as when he was in his usual genial frame of mind — but indifferently. There wasn't a particle of feeling *of any kind* in the way that door was shut.

Mrs. Gregory cast the newspaper dejectedly aside and commenced upon her duties for the day. She ripped apart a dress that needed altering, but quickly discovered that the task was beyond her skill. She put on a pair of old kid gloves and armed herself with shears and twine, to tie up the Crimson Rambler on the summer-house ; but the thorns scratched her arms, the wind blew her hair about her face, and she couldn't concentrate her thoughts on gardening anyway. She went into the kitchen to help Bertha ; but Bertha didn't need any help, and wasn't at all averse to saying so. Then, at eleven o'clock, her husband telephoned that he would not be home for lunch.

"I shall be detained at the office, Catharine," he informed her, briskly, and hung up the transmitter.

Catharine! He might have employed the same tone of voice in speaking to his stenographer. Mrs. Gregory stared thoughtfully at her reflection in the mirror.

No ; she was losing none of her attractiveness. Beneath the masses of dark brown hair, which her husband professed so much to admire, her forehead was smooth and white, her nose, short and straight, her eyes, large and deep blue, and her mouth, small — "a perfect Cupid's bow" — as Peter never tired of telling her. And if she was short and slim — *petite,* most people called her — at least she possessed a figure — and she pirouetted defiantly before the looking-glass. Not that she cared a snap of the finger what she looked like, she concluded angrily. *Catharine !* She would have something to say to Mr. Peter Gregory when he came home that night ! She dawdled over her solitary lunch for the better part of an hour, and sent most of it away untasted.

She wanted to go out shopping, and she didn't want to go out shopping. Some acquaintances called upon her unexpectedly, but they soon made their excuses and departed. She picked up a book to read — the soul-strivings of a modern woman was the theme of it — but although she had been completely enthralled by the story the day before, she threw it aside again before she had read a page. It was no use, she told herself at last disconsolately. Her day was spoiled.

Why had she quarreled with Peter the night before? Why was she always quarreling with Peter? Was it because she was

so thoroughly in earnest upon the woman question ? But Peter was also an advocate of woman's cause — she couldn't endure a man that was behind the times. But whereas Peter discussed the subject entertainingly and had all the data of the movement at his fingers' ends, she lived it, breathed it, joyed in each victory gained, and plunged in the deepest gloom at each defeat.

Woman must have supreme ownership over herself. That was the point, and — there was no use in evading it — that was the issue between them. To the " new " woman, an appeal made to any other sense than the intellect was an affront. When Peter brought her home a box of candy, for instance, or a bunch of flowers, and she accepted the gift, she tacitly admitted a status of inferiority ; and against this status her whole soul rebelled. She didn't want to be her husband's odalisque. Nor did she want to pry into his business affairs — his concerns exclusively, as some others were hers. She wanted to share his intellectual life — to enter the *holy of holies* of his mind — to merge her thought processes completely with his own ; and she had hinted these things to him quite plainly a score of times. She sighed. It had been a long, tiresome, discouraging day, she reflected wearily, as she changed her dress for dinner. Promptly on the stroke of six her husband's footsteps sounded in the hall.

" Good evening, Kitty."

Mrs. Gregory returned the greeting mechanically and took her seat at the table. She felt hot and cold by turns and wondered if she was going to be sick. Then she noticed that Peter was turning slightly gray about the temples. And he was growing thinner.

" You have quite a treasure in Bertha," his voice broke in upon her meditations. " Have a cutlet ? " — and he passed the platter across the table.

Mrs. Gregory helped herself to a cutlet.

" I see by the papers," he went on again, " that the ladies are going to fight the tariff on stockings — ' and hairpins and powder-puffs and things and things. ' " He looked up from his plate and forced a smile as he made the familiar quotation.

" And I learned to-day," he added, calmly ignoring his wife's silence, " that the working women of England are better protected legally than their sisters in the United States. . . . Have

some custard? I wonder how Bertha manages to get such a delicious golden-brown color on the top of her custards."

Mrs. Gregory declined the custard.

"Did you see where the young woman suffragette, who was standing on a pedestal outside the House of Commons, kicked off the policeman's helmet?" He laughed.

"I — I read the incident," his wife replied.

Mr. Gregory glanced across the table. "Why, Kate," he exclaimed, in pretended surprise, "you are not eating anything. Aren't you well?"

"I'm well enough," she answered chokingly.

But, after all, what cause had she to complain? Peter was treating her as she had always wanted to be treated. He wasn't paying her extravagant compliments; he wasn't congratulating her upon her hair, her eyes, her teeth, or other physical adornments. And he was scrupulously respecting her rights in her own person. He wasn't gamboling about her like a big Newfoundland dog; he wasn't "pawing" her. That unfortunate remark of hers had evidently sunk in. She wished from the bottom of her heart that she had never uttered it.

Her husband rose from the table, held open the door for her in his best manner, and ushered her into the library. She was wearing a dress that night that he had always liked — that he had always commented upon approvingly. It was a pretty dress, and it set off her slender figure admirably. He didn't even notice it.

"I've got some tickets," he said, when they were seated again. "A Mrs. Ada Clements-Dwight is going to lecture this evening upon 'The Intellectual Life,'" — and he smiled grimly. "Would you care to go? . . . . No." He shrugged his shoulders and tapped with his fingers lightly on the arm of his chair.

There was a long silence after that, during which Mr. Gregory occupied himself with his own reflections and gazed into the flames. Presently he turned his head. He was going to speak again, and his wife listened nervously.

"It's a fine night," he said, and returned to his meditations.

Mrs. Gregory stole sideways glances at her husband. She knew Peter. She knew that once he was resolved upon a course of action he would keep it up indefinitely. The determination that

was reflected in the severe cast of his thoughtful profile and the resolute set of his athletic shoulders had already won for him an enviable position in the world of business, and he would climb higher. He was the kind that always did climb higher.

"Catharine," he said, suppressing a yawn, "I should like to take a walk down town. Would you care to come along?"

She shook her head. She didn't want to go herself, nor did she want her husband to go and leave her behind. But what right had she to detain him? He had attempted to converse with her upon the subjects of the hour, and she had replied to all he said with monosyllables; he had offered to escort her to a lecture, where he would no doubt have been profoundly bored, and she had declined to go; he had suggested a walk, and she had refused to bear him company — what right had she to oppose his freedom of action, when she was such a stickler for her own? And why, oh! why had she used that most objectionable expression? It was positively ill-bred.

The heights of intellect, towards which she had set her face, loomed up before her cold and uninviting, for what indeed was life without affection? without Peter? If she let him go now, in his present frame of mind, she told herself, there would always be a barrier between them. She watched him rise and walk across the room, not hastily, nor slowly, but coolly and determinedly as he did everything; and all the while her heart beat out a mad tattoo of "*danger!*" She wanted to call out to him — to stop him — to bid him to remain, but some paralyzing influence — some force, against which she vainly struggled, sealed her lips. And his fingers were on the handle of the door. If she let him go now, her brain ground out objectively. If she let him go now —

"*Peter!*" — and all the agony of her soul was in that cry.

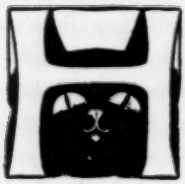
He turned and came swiftly towards her with arms outstretched.

"I was — I was — Last night —" she sobbed out brokenly on her husband's bosom.

And Peter understood.

Crowding His Luck.*

BY ELIZABETH CHANDLER HENDRIX.



E sat on a bench in the centre of the plaza with his hat drawn low over his eyes. Behind him the sun slanted toward the roof of the big hotel, and before him were the ashen hued slopes of Mount Franklin with violet shadows creeping toward the summit.

A cowboy with a pink handkerchief knotted loosely around his sunburned throat sat on one end of the bench and a Chinaman with an oily looking queue wound around his head occupied the other. Opposite, at an intersection of the paths was an invalid's chair in which sat a hollow-cheeked, unshaven man wrapped in blankets. Against the cement coping of the tank in the centre lounged a miscellaneous horde of Mexicans, negroes and street loafers, lazily watching a motionless alligator blinking in the sun. Beyond the grass plot were double rows of benches lined with men, all likewise with low drawn hats and in various attitudes of listlessness or dejection.

The sun dropped behind the hotel roof and the air in the plaza grew chill. Here and there a Mexican unrolled his blanket and flinging it around his shoulders with a single sweep of the arm, strolled leisurely away. The woman on the end of the seat next the invalid's chair tucked the blankets tenderly about him and rolled the chair out toward the street.

Down at the entrance to the plaza cars came and went. Automobiles skidded honking around the corners on two wheels and cowboys at an easy canter clattered by. Frosted electric globes bloomed among the foliage around the square and over on the tall building at the Little Plaza flamed a dazzling electric sign.

The cowboy arose, stamped his feet until the spurs rattled and strolled down the path toward the Palace Saloon. The Chinaman

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produced materials from his baggy sleeve, rolled a cigarette and lighting it with a match extracted from the row protruding from his queue shuffled off after the cowboy.

The man left on the bench pushed back his hat and turned a pair of bloodshot eyes in the same direction, as if debating whether or not he should follow them. It was a boyish face, marred now by signs of recent dissipation.

He thrust a hand into his pocket and drawing it out thoughtfully contemplated the contents. It shone dull and yellow in the light of the frosted globes — gold coin — and one might have noted that the hand was singularly thin and white and nerveless.

Twice his gaze turned uncertainly after the cowboy and the Chinaman, then the bell in the watch-tower up at the corner where the railroad tracks crossed the street-car line, clanged noisily and he looked up to see an engine emerge from the cañon of tall buildings followed by a long line of passenger coaches. Slowly it passed, with white-coated porters on the platforms and passengers gazing languidly from the lighted windows. It was the through express for Chicago.

The boy's eyes followed it as it moved out, picking up speed, until the rear platform swung around the curve, then dropping the coin back into his pocket he arose and walked down to the entrance to the plaza.

A car marked " MEXICO " was turning the corner at the Shelden Hotel. On the end it bore a placard reading,

" LE GRAN FIESTA, JUAREZ. CARS RUN ALL NIGHT."

He got aboard when the car stopped and sank into one of the rear seats in his original attitude with hat over his eyes.

The car made the loop and passed along the brightly lighted length of San Antonio Street, then turned into a squalid quarter of narrow streets and low adobe houses. It rumbled over the Staunton Street bridge and stopped on the Mexican side while the customs officers went through, then proceeded on its way through other narrow, dimly lighted streets until it stopped before the big brick building in the centre of the main street of Juarez. Here the boy alighted and followed the crowd to the plaza.

It was a dusty forlorn little plaza with flickering lights among

the scrubby trees. From the band-stand up in the centre came the alluringly sweet music of a Mexican band. On one side were refreshment booths where sweating men in gaudy sashes were dispensing pink lemonade and watery ice-cream.

The boy followed the crowd moving in the opposite direction, where were assembled the usual gambling devices of a Mexican *fiesta*. Around the parrot-like dice cages and wheels-of-fortune young men and boys crowded, playing with the melancholy silence which characterizes the Mexican even in his most festive moods. Back of these were more secluded games, sheltered booths in which he caught glimpses of velvet-skinned women pushing heaps of yellow coin across the table with jeweled fingers, to be ruthlessly swept off and as quickly replaced by the men in evening clothes who stood behind them.

In the open alley-way between, surged a motley crowd composed of elements from all quarters of the globe, miners from down Cananea way, cowboys from the Texas side, young bloods from El Paso bent on seeing the sights, native *rancheros* in skin-tight, silver-buttoned trousers and jacket, and, gliding among them, tall, blanketed and sandaled *pelaos* from the Sierra Madre.

The movement of the crowd was toward the end of the alley-way, where the game of the evening was in progress. As the crowd reached the spot it parted and spread around the table, as a stream parts and flows around a rock. Pushing, elbowing, the boy made his way to the front. It was a man's game, a game for money and lots of it. The board was covered not with chips nor with Mexican *pesos* but with real money — stacks of yellow coin like that which now jingled in his own pocket.

On the opposite side of the table stood the cowboy of the afternoon with the pink handkerchief around his neck, chewing the end of a big unlit cigar and slowly and deliberately placing one gold piece on top of another. Beside him stood a fat drummer in a white waistcoat, looking a bit white around the gills but gamely staying with it and stacking up coin for coin with the cowboy. Slightly in the background was a grave clerical-looking person with a thin face and narrow eyes, and beside him a gentleman in immaculate evening clothes, evidently a deserter from the screened booths, who had found that game too tame for him.

The ball spun dizzily for a moment, then slower and slower, and stopped with a click. The operator doubled the pile of the thin man and the one in evening clothes, and swept the board clean.

The cowboy scratched a match on the edge of the table and held it to his unlit cigar as the coin clinked into a box under the table. As he did so his eyes met those of his silent companion of the afternoon. For a moment he held them, cool, steady, as if training across the barrel of a Colt's forty-five, then tossing away the match walked around and stood beside him.

Eager hands were thrust out, dropping stakes on the table, lean brown hands, broad spatulated hands, shapeless toil-worn hands, and among them the white nerveless hands of the newcomer.

"Let it alone pard!" the cowboy warned, laying a restraining hand on his arm, "It's crooked — crookeder'n hell!"

The boy looked up at him inquiringly.

"Do you believe in luck?" he asked.

"Sure Mike!" was the response.

"Then you believe in crowding it for all it's worth when it comes your way."

"That's me, but it takes mighty darned good luck to go against a game like that."

"Well, I've got it — watch me!" and he shoved a yellow disc on the table.

The ball whirled, slowed down and stopped. This time the operator doubled the fat drummer's pile and raked off the rest into the box under the table.

"Go easy, pard!" the cowboy again warned. "They cleaned me out."

"Well, they won't hurt me I tell you — luck's my way. Let me tell you, old man," with the confidential loquacity of a half drunk, "maybe you think you know what hard luck is, but you ain't seen one, two, three. I've been up against it good and plenty and don't you forget it! Say, — d'you ever think what it was like to be a 'lunger'? Well, that was what I was until yesterday when I got my ticket of leave. Cured, by gum! and cured to stay! Never had the 'bugs' the doctor says."

"Then you ain't got no cause to have the grouch," the cowboy remarked.

"No — ain't that what I'm tellin' you. My luck's turned and that's what I'm here for, to crowd it for all it's worth, to play it until I clean out every damned greaser game on the ground!" and he lurched unsteadily against his companion.

"Been hittin' it up pretty lively ain't you?" he of the pink handkerchief inquired.

"Nixie! Just celebratin' a little. Let me tell you — " steadying himself against the table — "A year ago I was all to the good, had a nest egg in bank, a fine job, and a girl. Yes, there's a girl in this story — did you ever hear one worth telling if there wasn't? She was the goods all right, all right! Not a snake-charmer like some of the story-book girls, nor a devlish looker like your senoritas, just a plain red-headed girl who worked in a store, but she looked good to me. We were going to be married in a month when it happened. I went into a doctor's office to get some medicine for a cold and came out, 'a lunger.' 'Go to El Paso' he said, 'it's your only chance.' I took the money I had been saving for a home and went. It seemed a pretty big pile while I was saving it, but it wasn't much when you come to spend it. I was just wonderin' what the other poor devils did when their coin gave out while the river was dry when they turned me loose with exactly three of them yellow boys left," and he held up a twenty-dollar gold piece, "three of 'em — just enough to pay my way back home!"

The play had stopped and the players were listening with varying expressions of amusement or tolerance.

"Why didn't you go?" somebody inquired.

"I thought about that," meditatively spinning the coin on the table. "I've been thinkin' about it all day — kep' thinkin' about it until the last train pulled out. But what's the use? You can't buy a house an' lot with sixty dollars, not even if I'd been able to beat my way back home. You can't marry a red-headed girl on sixty dollars, now can you?" appealing to his hearers. The crowd laughed uproariously. "No sir, you can't!" loosening his grip and again lurching against the cowboy in the pink handkerchief, "Not if you're square, an' I'm square, fellers, that's what I am! I'm square. But I'll tell you what you can do, you can beat any game that was ever put up if your luck's right,

an' the minute the doctor told me that, I knowed mine was, turned, like it always does when I get down to my last white chip. This is it — " again holding up the twenty-dollar gold piece. " Now watch it work ! " and leaning over he carefully deposited it on No. 13.

" Well, I'll be damned ! " the cowboy ejaculated. " You've got the nerve ! "

" What's the matter with you ? " the boy sneered. " Think you've got it all ? Because you've got a skin like tanned leather and muscle like a prize fighter d'you think you've got a corner on nerve ? Well, let me tell you something, for Simon pure unadulterated nerve them limp scare-crows settin' around the plaza over there lookin' like thirty cents could give you cards and spades and beat you at the game ! Most any old thing can march out with bands playing and flags flying and stand up to be shot at, knowin' all the time that he'll be cracked up for a hero if he happens to get hit, but to set around like that coughin' your life away, waitin' for the Thing to steal up on you like a Greaser in the dark, God — ! " and he stopped with a shudder. " Watch it ! " He yelled — " Watch it ! " as the ball moved slower and slower and dropped into No. 13 !

" What'd I tell you ? " he half shrieked, leaning over and shoving the coins on to 26. " You can't stop me because it's my time to win ! " And win he did, surely and steadily, playing always on multiples of 13. The other players dropped out and stood back to watch the little drama of a fool's luck which most of them had seen played out before. Gradually the excitement spread over the grounds, and other games were abandoned while the players gathered around to see the fun. Still the boy's luck held. More and more reluctantly the swarthy operator spun the ball and stacked up the yellow coin. At last he stopped and turned appealing eyes to the player.

" *No mas Senor !* " He pleaded, spreading out empty appealing hands, " *No mas dinero !* "

The cowboy moved closer to his side. " Oh yes there is, Miguel Jose Juan Maria ! " he urged. " There's plenty *dinero* down there in that little box — look again ! "

" But Senor — "

"No *mas* Jose — no *mas* talkee, talkee!" gently pressing something round and cold in the space between the braided jacket and crimson sash, something that sent a shiver along the Mexican's spine. "No *mas,* hit her up, Jose — sabe?"

Reluctantly the operator set the ball spinning and again and again the lad won.

"Say when!" the cowboy remarked, still boring the cold round object against the Mexican's ribs. "Better come off before you crowd her too much!"

"Once more!" the boy shouted, sweeping the yellow discs together for another play, "Only once more! We've made the circuit and now we'll stop right where we begun on No. 13!"

"For God sake, man, come away!" some one cried excitedly, seizing him as if to remove him forcibly from the table.

"Lemme alone!" he grumbled thickly, struggling away from the detaining hands, "Lemme alone, it's my last play."

The operator glanced at the cowboy and the cowboy steadily regarded the player. "Hit her up once more, *Jose,*" he ordered, "Hit her up, we'd as well see the finish."

It was over quickly, so quickly that those on the outskirts of the crowd scarcely realized it had happened. Dizzily the ball spun around the circle, slower, and slower, and for the second time that night dropped into No. 13!

A roar went up from the crowd. The operator sullenly gathered handfuls of gold from the box and threw it on the table.

"What'd I tell you!" the boy yelled, looking back at the crowd over his shoulder and reaching both arms across the table to gather up the gold. "What'd I tell you! You can't lose when there's a red-headed girl in the game!"

His head dropped forward limply on his arms and he lay across the table motionless.

"Drunk!" some one ejaculated, "Dead drunk!"

The cowboy bent over and turned the limp form to the light. A tiny red stream was trickling over the yellow heap and spreading out in a pool on the table.

He turned and faced the crowd gravely.

"Boys," he said, "he was right, it was his last play, he's cashed in."